

FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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TO : Department of State

FROM SAN SALVADOR 481 December 27, 1950 1 ENCLOSURE ^{MEMO}

REF EMBDES 434, December 13, 1950

SUBJECT SALVADORAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S SECRETARY REPORTS HONDURAN
BORDER PROBLEM

In connection with the present efforts to settle soon the long-standing Salvador-Honduras boundary dispute, the memorandum of conversation which took place on December 27 between Mario CASTRO, personal secretary to Foreign Minister Roberto E. CANESSA, and Vice Consul John B. YOUNG is enclosed. As will be noted, Mr. Castro informed Mr. Young that the Foreign Minister had been called urgently to the Honduran border as a result of an incident between Salvadorans and Hondurans in the area over the border question during which "at least two Honduran citizens" were reported killed.

In view of the conversation reported in the memorandum, it may be significant that the Foreign Minister left San Salvador for the eastern frontier of the Republic on December 24 and, according to his home and a high Foreign Office official, has not yet returned. The Minister had invited a small group of friends including the undersigned to his home on Christmas Eve but he did not appear. Mrs. Canessa, when asked where her husband was, was evasive and finally said reluctantly that he was attending an "important conference near San Miguel". Efforts to reach the Foreign Minister today finally elicited the confidential information that he can be reached at his farm in the Department of Usulután in the Eastern part of the country, relatively near the disputed area and the Honduran frontier.



William A. Wisland
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim

Enclosure:

Memorandum of Conversation

cc: Ambassador Tegucigalpa

WAW:land:pr

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Enclosure to Despatch No. 481 of December 27, 1950, from
 Embassy San Salvador, El Salvador.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants: Mario CASTRO, Secretary to Salvadoran Foreign
 Minister

Vice Consul John B. YOUNG

Date : December 27, 1950

Subject : Salvadoran-Honduran Border Dispute

In connection with Canessa's failure to appear at the get-together in his house the evening of December 24, I have just ascertained from Mario CASTRO, Canessa's personal secretary, (during a luncheon engagement with him), that Canessa was called up to the Honduran border on December 24 in order to smooth over an incident arising between Honduras and Salvadoran families living in the neighborhood of the disputed area. As a result of an argument over the border problem, at least two Honduran citizens were shot and killed, according to Castro. Apparently both the Honduran and Salvadoran authorities were mutually interested in smoothing over the incident.

Castro's reaction to the border question (which may well reflect Canessa's since Castro has plenty of admiration for Don Roberto) is that Honduras is being very unreasonable in maintaining its claim to the disputed area, since it has so much land, and over-populated El Salvador has so little. In reply to a question of mine, Castro stated that he thought El Salvador would end by not getting the area in question. He seemed very definite, resigned, and discouraged about the matter.

When he first began discussing the subject, Castro stated that the reason for Canessa's trip to the frontier was to discuss a misunderstanding that had arisen during the border study discussions. He then switched to the fact that Canessa had rushed there as a result of the shootings, and did not again refer to the misunderstanding or its precise nature. However, it is my impression that the word misunderstanding did not refer to the shootings.

For your general information, Castro discusses a number of subjects that are probably current talk within the Ministry, as if the facts and the Ministry's reaction to them were equally current talk in all diplomatic circles. I have found that just continuing the discussion casually usually brings out more information, but that pressing makes him faintly worried and somewhat cautious. We get along quite well, and have exchanged luncheon invitations to date.

JBYoung :pr

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